

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

221334Z Jul 03

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 004591

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2012

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: AMBASSADOR'S JULY 21 FAREWELL CALL ON  
ANKARA MAYOR GOKCEK

(U) Classified by Ambassador W. Robert Pearson.  
Reason:1.5(b)(d)

1. (C) Ambassador paid a farewell call July 21 on I. Melih Gokcek, long-time and currently independent Mayor of Ankara. Gokcek provided his view on recent U.S.-Turkey tensions and how to repair them. Gokcek observed that anti-Americanism is on the rise and risks becoming a permanent, and decisive, feature of Turkish-American political relations in the wake of the July 4 incident in Suleimaniyah. He noted that the skyrocketing sales of Cola Turka (a new product marketed by the Ulker company, long associated with culturally conservative political circles) are a direct result of the strong sense of wounded Turkish national pride felt on the streets.

2. (C) Ambassador thanked Gokcek, and noted at length that the USG had, in fact, good reason to believe that Turkish Special Forces troops in Suleimaniyah had been preparing to take action inimical to stability in Iraq. The point immediately registered with, and was understood by, Gokcek, who then observed that the AK Government is facing strong pressure from three sources: 1) the USG; 2) the Turkish General Staff (TGS); and 3) the Turkish public. The Government has to take into account all three pressure centers without offending any of them. Speaking candidly, Gokcek observed that "if the AK Government offends the USG, we know our economy will be in trouble. If it offend the TGS, you know better than I do just what will happen. If AK offends the voters it will be finished politically." He added that if relations continue to sour as a result of the July 4 or similar incidents, the GOT will have to choose sides with "either of the two domestic groups" -- the Turkish people or the TGS. Absent a signal of friendship from the U.S. directly to the Turkish people, things risked getting worse.

-----  
Local Politics  
-----

3. (C) Speaking of the voters, Gokcek observed that the public as a rule "only remembers what you've done in your last year of office" -- right before elections. He referred in that vein to the numerous road-building and other construction/urban renewal projects currently underway across Ankara. He downplayed speculation that Turkey will head this fall to nation-wide local elections (mandatory by April 2004), noting that President Sezer seems to be in veto-mode and is likely to try to veto any election law that comes down the pike -- thus at the very least delaying or otherwise complicating any fall election time-table that might be under consideration. Gokcek offered nonchalantly that "I'll probably be joining AK in a few weeks," dismissing the possibility that Kecioren Mayor Turgut Altinok will challenge him for the ruling AK Party's Ankara mayoral nomination.

-----  
Comment  
-----

4. (C) Gokcek is a keen political observer and ambitious operator who makes it his business to keep abreast of what is on the voter's minds -- and understands his potential value to P.M./AK Chairman Erdogan as a successful mayor of Turkey's capital and second largest city as the local election campaign kicks off. A nationalist at heart, Gokcek nevertheless has long looked askance at the TGS, and has long opposed its dominant role in politics and policy-making. In this context, it is worth underscoring Gokcek's suggestion that they way to assuage wounded Turkish pride is by an appeal to the electorate rather than to the TGS -- which, while certainly feeling the sting, has its own agenda and reasons for portraying itself as the guardian of Turkish national honor.

15. (C) Though extremely well-informed about national politics, reflecting his aspirations for a national leadership role, Gokcek is still for now keeping his feet firmly on local ground. During the Q and A with the press before the private meeting, only one question was asked to the Ambassador -- by a Gokcek staffer seeking his comment on the quality of city services.

PEARSON